

LOUDOUN COUNTY SCHOOL BASED PROBATION (SBP)

The Loudoun County School Based Probation (SBP) is an on-site service delivery system that brings probation staff to the juveniles in their normal day-to-day school environment. SBP currently has 9 Probation Officers in 12 of the 13 high schools (3 of those Probation Officers are serving 2 high schools) providing probationary and preventative services. SBP was instituted during the 2002-2003 school year. This program involves inter-agency cooperation among court service unit personnel, school officials and law enforcement. The County of Loudoun and Loudoun County Public Schools have a Memorandum of Understanding for SBP. SBP was initially funded by a U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Orientated Policing Services (COPS) federal grant. Initial start-up costs were covered by the grant.

By having a probation officer assigned to a high school, as well as the younger population that attend feeder schools, there is a more focused approach to that student population and a closer and more unified delivery of probationary services to those youth identified as high risk and court involved. Additionally, this focused effort provides a safety net to those students who might be tempted, through peer pressure or otherwise, to fall into delinquency patterns. Rapid and consistent responses to school and community misbehavior by probationers is considered one of the strongest deterrents to misbehavior by non-court involved youth. Statistical data reveals that having a probation officer in the school means improved attendance, academic performance, and behavior in the school setting. The rate of recidivism is reduced with this population which lends to a safer school environment and community-at-large.

SBP goals include:

- (1) To improve school attendance of court involved youth
- (2) To reduce incidents of problem behaviors of court involved youth (both in-school and out-of-school)
- (3) To provide pre-truancy activities to divert youth from formal court appearance when appropriate.
- (4) To decrease the number of suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, for court involved youth.
- (5) To improve the grades of court involved youth.
- (6) To decrease subsequent charges and probation violations including a reduction in the rate of detentions for those court involved youth.
- (7) To reduce the number of violent offense in the schools participating in the program.

While recidivism rates for court-involved youth are target, a child with an improved attendance record will perform better academically, and overall behavior in school and the community will improve as well. Truancy often leads to delinquent behavior for many youth. The school based probation officer monitors attendance on a daily basis. The communication gaps between schools and Probation Officers have been greatly reduced.

SBP, with its successes, hopes to serve as the model service delivery for providing prevention and intervention in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The goal of the Court Service Unit is to have SBP in the schools an average of 80% of the school week. In addition to providing probationary services in the school setting, preventative services are provided and are a large focus of SBP. The school-based probation officers often impact truancy and other pre-delinquent behaviors amongst the general school population as well as the court-involved youth. Preventative measures include conflict mediations, gang training/awareness for faculty and students, and anti-bullying information designed for first offenders and at-risk youth.

LOUDOUN COUNTY SCHOOL-BASED PROBATION OFFICER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **ENFORCE COURT ORDERS OF ALL COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH.**
- **RAPID RESPONSE TO ALL PROBATION AND COURT ORDER VIOLATIONS.**
- **IMPLEMENT GRADUATED SANCTIONS TO COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH WHEN NON-COMPLIANT.**
- **MONITOR ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE, AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF PROBATION CLIENTS.**
- **DISSEMINATE INFORMATION TO RELATED AGENCIES WITH COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH**
- **ACT AS LIAISON BETWEEN THE COURT SERVICE UNIT AND THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.**
- **MAINTAIN FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT WITH PROBATIONERS 3-5X PER WEEK.**
- **PERFORM CLIENT AND FAMILY MEETINGS AT THE SCHOOL.**
- **COORDINATE COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS AT THE SCHOOL AND SURROUNDING AREA.**
- **MAINTAIN COLLATERAL CONTACTS WITH TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND SCHOOL STAFF.**
- **MAINTAIN A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER AND THE SCHOOL SECURITY SPECIALIST.**
- **ASSIST SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN IDENTIFYING STUDENTS EXHIBITING ‘HIGH RISK’ BEHAVIORS.**
- **PROVIDE PREVENTATIVE SERVICES FOR HIGH RISK BEHAVIOR.**
- **PROVIDE PREVENTATIVE SERVICES FOR TRUANCY.**
- **FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH AND PARENTS.**
- **ATTEND AFTER SCHOOL EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.**
- **OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED.**

School based probation via preventative services helps avoid violent incidents.

The School Security, School Resource Officer and School probation officer is the ideal team to intervene or prevent violence in schools.

There are many incidents since 2003 in Loudoun County where nothing bad has occurred because vigilance and follow up by the team has prevented a bad outcome. Everyone knows that that we cannot measure what doesn't happen. But we are involved in prevention every day at our assigned schools.

One occasion at Park View a subject made a statement that he was "going to shoot people" The matter was reported to our team at the security office. Eric Paul, the SRO and this PO went to the home of the subject. We retrieved a .22 caliber semi automatic rifle from the closet of the youth's room. This was done with the consent of the parents. This type of prevention incident is not unusual in the realm of School Based Probation. There are numerous similar incidents we can highlight.

Gang riot (that never occurred)

In August, 2009, the school-based probation officer at Heritage High School in Leesburg received an anonymous text message from an individual to advise that a gang fight was planned at 12 noon in front of Leesburg Elementary school, involving MS 13 and 18th Street gang members. The message was clear, that the two gangs were planning to fight at that location and that it was “gonna get ugly”. The school-based probation officers from the (then) two Leesburg high schools staked out inconspicuously near the school not knowing if this text was a hoax or not. They alerted Leesburg police beforehand.

They observed a school bus unloading several high school aged students at that location. Shortly afterward, 2-3 vehicles pulled into the parking lot where several more youth exited the vehicles with some of the youth had baseball bats in hand ready to combat. The probation officers called police immediately, and with the police headquarters approximately ¼ mile from the scene, several police cars arrived at the scene before any fighting occurred. The youth scattered in several different directions, however all were eventually apprehended and arrested.

The young man who sent the text (we later learned his identity, 18th street gang member) was indeed one of the youth who was planning to combat. We surmised that he was simply attempting to keep himself safe from harm. The young man was on probation and it is believed that due to his high frequency of contact with his PO and the strong rapport established between client and school-based PO, that he felt confident that his PO would take measures to prevent this riot and possible tragedy from occurring.